

February 19, 2017

To the members of the Appropriations Committee,

As the director of the Avon Free Public Library, a devoted library user, and someone who has worked in public and special libraries in Connecticut for more than 30 years, I am dismayed and disheartened to see library funding in our state once again threatened. While I recognize the seriousness of the Connecticut's budget crisis, continued cuts to an already bare bones budget for the Connecticut State Library will have serious repercussions for libraries across the state.

Eliminating all funding for the borrowIT reciprocal borrowing program and annualizing previous budget holdbacks that impact the Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC), the statewide interlibrary delivery system (deliverIT), and our statewide digital library (researchIT) will make it more difficult for Connecticut's 170+ independent public libraries to share our collections, while at the same time threatening the sustainability of cooperative efforts like group purchasing through CLC and shared digital assets like databases and e-books.

Completely eliminating both funding for borrowIT and the statute that made Connecticut a pioneer in resource sharing back in the 1970s is a short-sighted way to save money. The borrowIT grants paid to public libraries prove not only to be an incentive to permit non-resident borrowing, effectively creating a statewide library card, but also provide crucial funding to local libraries. At Avon Library, we have used our borrowIT grant to fund subscriptions to digital magazines, additional large print books for vision impaired readers, computer software, building improvements and professional development training for staff.

Over the years, CLC has saved millions of dollars for Connecticut libraries. Last year, Avon Library saved more than \$70,000 using CLC negotiated discounts to purchase books, audio-visual materials, supplies, and computer software and hardware. A small state investment in this organization translates into massive savings to hundreds of libraries every year.

While the digital revolution has made sharing some information as fast and easy as pressing a button, Connecticut libraries still have millions of items in their collections that are not available electronically. Providing a delivery service to let residents request books from neighboring libraries facilitates cost effective resource sharing. Not every library needs to purchase every book, yet our residents still have ready access to much more than just what their local library has funds and space to provide. The deliverIT system, already under stress from increased usage, needs more resources, not fewer.

Despite Connecticut's fiscal condition, I do believe that restoring library funding needs to be a priority. Libraries are a cornerstone of democracy, providing information, education and recreation to all our residents regardless of their ability to pay. Libraries are part of the infrastructure of the information economy and can help rebuild Connecticut, but only if they continue to get needed support from the State Library.

Respectfully submitted,

Glenn Grube
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Vice-President/President Elect, Connecticut Library Association